

Overview

Dahlgren was established in October 1918 and named in honor of Rear Admiral John Adolphus Dahlgren, who is considered the father of modern naval ordnance. Prior to 1918, the Navy had operated a proving ground at Indian Head, Maryland, but Indian Head could no longer support the river range testing, which required a more remote facility. Considering its location on Machodoc Creek near the Potomac River, Dahlgren's 4,500-acre site was ideal for testing long-range naval guns. It continues to be the major testing area for naval gun ballistics.

When expertise built upon the mathematical needs for ballistic plotting expanded into computer systems, Dahlgren became the leading systems source for national, theater, operational, and tactical level systems such as ballistic missiles, global positioning systems, the TOMAHAWK Missile System, the AEGIS Combat System, and other warfare systems.

Dahlgren Laboratory is the leading naval facility for scientific and technological research, development, testing, and evaluation in such diverse areas as surface ship combat systems, ordnance, strategic and strike systems, and theater warfare. Dahlgren has six technical departments, each responsible for a particular research, development, test and evaluation effort in support of the Navy and Department of Defense (DoD). Dahlgren also hosts several tenants: the Naval Space Command, the AEGIS Training and Readiness Center, and the Joint Warfare Analysis Center.

With a work force of over 3,500 civilian and military employees, plus 1,500 tenant civilian and military employees, and an additional 4,000 contractor employees—Dahlgren Laboratory contributes over three quarters of a billion dollars to the regional community's economy each year.

Historical Highlights

The history of Dahlgren includes a tradition of innovation and excellence, and a heritage rich in contributions to the Navy, DoD, and the world. Past milestones include:

- First tests of radio-controlled aircraft conducted in 1923
- First calibrations of bombs begun in 1923
- Location of the first Navy ordnance computer, the Mark I Aiken Dahlgren Relay Calculator
- Development and testing of the Norton bombsight, which helped win World War II
- Provision of scientific expertise that was tapped for the Manhattan Project during World War II for the development of the atomic bomb
- Establishment of Navy ordnance schools during World War II
- Home base for the POLARIS program's mathematical specifications and computer programs
- Development and long-term support of the AEGIS computer system for operational AEGIS cruisers and destroyers



Current Technical Departments at Dahlgren Laboratory

Currently, the six departments at Dahlgren support the Navy and DoD in the following areas:

- Systems Research and Technology Department—directs and conducts systems research and technology development and demonstration
- Weapons Systems Department—provides safe, innovative, and cost-effective surface-launched gun, missile, and Marine Corps weapon systems
- Joint Warfare Applications Department—provides leadership, vision, and quality products as solutions for traditional and nontraditional missions
- Strategic and Strike Systems Department—provides concept and requirements development, design, integration, and testing of Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM), Cruise Missile, and Joint Unmanned Aerial Vehicle systems
- Combat Systems Department—provides technical leadership and systems engineering for Navy surface ships
- Theater Warfare Systems Department—provides a warfare focus to evaluate warfighting concepts, technology initiatives, and acquisition strategies in a theater context



NSWCDD/MP-99/46:

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